

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

MACHIAVELLI.

THE HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND DIPLOMATIC WRITINGS OF NICCOLÒ MACHIAVELLI. Translated from the Italian by CHRISTIAN E. DETMOLD. 4 vols. \$10. xli., 420, 464, 488, 472. James R. Osgood & Co.

Mr. Detmold very truly observes in his preface that Machiavelli has been abused much more than he has been read. It would probably be difficult to name any writer, ancient or modern, who is so little known and yet bears so bad a reputation; and if the present publication should have no other effect than to lead to an examination of the basis upon which this exceptional notoriety has rested for three hundred years, there would still be ample justification for its appearance. There have been various translations from Machiavelli in our language, but none complete. The most comprehensive, we believe, was that made by an English clergyman named Farnworth, over a hundred years ago; but the only version current at present is the anonymous one in Bohn's Standard Library, which includes only the "History of Florence," "The Prince," and a few slight tracts and fragments. Mr. Detmold, debarred from active pursuits by some years of impaired health, has found a pleasant occupation and indulged a noble ambition by making the new translation which is here presented in a smooth and imposing form. The four thick volumes are beautifully printed on heavy paper, in a style appropriately sober, and heliotrope portraits of Machiavelli, Lorenzo de' Medici and Cesare Borgia are inserted. The writings presented here are "The History of Florence," which, though not of high value as authority, is of great interest for its vivacity and its philosophic grasp; the notorious treatise on "The Prince"; the "Discourses on the first Decade of Livy," in which Machiavelli lays down for the guidance of States a code of principles corresponding somewhat with the advice he gives elsewhere to princes; the excellent letters in which he renders an official account of his various diplomatic missions; and a few miscellaneous papers, mostly on affairs of State. These comprise all the works necessary to a comprehension of the man's character and genius. Mr. Detmold has turned them into simple and sufficiently fluent English, lacking sometimes in elegance and not faultless in the tenses, but furnishing upon the whole pretty easy reading.

There is not much doubt that the strange differences of opinion on the subject of Machiavelli's morals, and the new interest in him which has lately been aroused, must be in part attributed to the fervor of Italian political sentiment. He was one of the first preachers of Italian unity and independence. He was keenly sensible of the miseries inflicted upon the States of the peninsula by their neighbors and invaders. He saw them preyed upon by Frenchmen, German and Spaniard in turn; and he felt that Italy never could be prosperous and great till her petty divisions were obliterated and the wretched hirsling bands of condottieri, who supplied the Italian princes with burlesque soldiery, were replaced by a national army. By conviction he was a republican, but he held independence of more importance than any particular form of government; he perceived that unity was the first requisite for independence; and since unity was unattainable then under a republic, he sought to consolidate the Italian States under one princely rule, believing that a strong and enlightened despotic was better than puny and anarchical commonwealths harried by foreigners. He placed his hopes in the House of Medici; and one of his avowed objects in writing "The Prince," and presenting it to Lorenzo the Magnificent, was to teach that ruler how to govern the States which he might "acquire." The purpose with which he served the Medici is the key alike to his political conduct and his political writings. He favored their ambition because it seemed to him the readiest agency for the promotion of Italian unity; and he recommended to them perilily and hypocritically because he did not believe that they could maintain themselves by truth and honor. It has indeed been argued that Machiavelli's intention was to arm his countrymen against despotism by exhibiting its methods in the most revolting light. There never was any real foundation for this over-charitable hypothesis, and it is now generally abandoned. Mr. Detmold, who discusses the moral question briefly in his preface, wastes no words upon this theory; but he is not ready to admit the full responsibility of his author for the scandalous system of practical politics laid down in the treatise. Machiavelli, he reminds us, was not the originator of the scheme of fraud which he describes; almost all government in his time was a cheat; diplomacy was a lie, nobly kept faith a moment longer than self-interest dictated. Machiavelli only set down in writing the principles upon which all sovereigns acted. Besides, the apologist, his morality is not so bad after all, and there are many passages of his book which condemn what is often the only palliation of deceit in this world carry the day, and so a wise prince must not be scrupulous about employing them. It is essential that he should seem to be virtuous; it is pernicious for him always to practise virtue. He should "seem to be merciful, fair, fateful, humane, religious and upright, and should even be so in reality; but he should have his mind so trained that, when occasion requires it, he may know how to change to the opposite." He cannot always do what is right. He is often obliged, "for the sake of maintaining his state, to act contrary to humanity, charity and religion." Nor is it only in certain chapters of "The Prince" that the Florentine statesman lays down such rules. The same tone runs through his writings generally. He looks upon the object of his pursuit as one to be reached at any cost; by fair means if possible; by lies, cruelty, corruption and breach of faith if fair means will not answer. To show by the citation of passages of another sort that Machiavelli honored and incited virtue is only to prove that he was aware of the immorality of his own teachings and to weaken what is after all the only palliation of his offenses, that the customs of the time had blunted the general conscience as to political perfidy. Honor and faith were not valued in the sixteenth century as they are now; but Machiavelli had the distinction of explicitly advising in a calm, serious and systematic treatise the commission of crimes which less cynical politicians habitually allowed themselves. That is why he must always remain the great scandal of statesmanship.

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